

Dear School Administrator,

The Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center (LCHD/CHC) applauds your leadership and commitment to the education, safety, and health of our children and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to the recent release of Restore Illinois, the State of Illinois' public health approach to safely reopen the state, LCHD/CHC is providing further information to assist you as you navigate through programming and learning through the summer and in preparation for the fall.

Restore Illinois and Schools

LCHD/CHC relied upon the state for direction in our guidance on school closings and will continue to rely on them for guidance on reopening Lake County schools.

Restore Illinois consists of five phases, and Phase 4 is when schools may reopen. As of May 29, 2020, our region moved into Phase 3 (Recovery) of the 5-phase plan, which means **we are not yet at the point to reopen schools. School reopening occurs in Phase 4 (Revitalization).**

In order to move into Phase 4, our Northeast region needs to achieve certain benchmarks as laid out in the Restore Illinois plan. These benchmarks include the following:

- At or under a 20% positivity rate for those tested for COVID-19 and increasing no more than 10 percentage points over 14 days.
- No overall increase in hospital admissions for COVID-19 like illness for 28 days.
- Surge capacity of at least 14% of ICU beds, medical and surgical beds, and ventilators.
- Testing is available in our region regardless of symptoms or risk factors.
- A goal that contact tracing and monitoring begins within 24 hours of diagnosis for more than 90% of cases in the region.

See the full [Restore Illinois Plan](#) for further details.

While Lake County and the region work to achieve these benchmarks, **we recommend that schools remain flexible and begin preparing for when it is time to reopen.**

Summer School

Schools can only provide e-learning for summer school. Youth sport guidelines have been released and can be accessed at this link: <https://dceocovid19resources.com/assets/Restore-Illinois/businessguidelines3/youthsports.pdf>.

Preparing Schools for Fall

If the above benchmarks are not yet met or if the state does not advise schools to reopen, there is the possibility that in the fall, schools will still require e-learning.

While opening schools in the fall is still uncertain, we strongly advise school leaders to begin planning the steps they will need to take to keep students and their families healthy and prevent COVID-19 infections for when it is appropriate and safe to reopen. Below are some potential strategies for district and school leaders to think about as they prepare and anticipate further state guidance. Expanded strategies from the CDC can be found by visiting: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools-h.pdf>. A supplemental "Decision Tree" from the CDC is attached to this email as a reference.

Strategies to Allow for Social Distancing

- Modify classes in which students are likely to have close physical contact.
- Increase space between desks to 6 feet.
- Minimize class sizes to allow for social distancing. This could mean alternating mornings and afternoons or week by week at schools.
- Consider holding some classes online for older students to maximize space in the school building.
- Stagger lunch times and limit how many students can sit at a table. Create lunchroom space that allows six feet of separation. Use all available spaces for lunch and consider having students eat lunch in classrooms that are already set up for social distancing.
- Consider having teachers switch classrooms instead of having students enter hallways between class periods.
- Mark spacing of 6 feet in the gym and hold gym classes without contact sports and games.
- Do not have recess or have additional gym class in lieu of recess time. Keep playgrounds closed.
- Stagger use of shared restrooms and locker rooms to allow for social distancing.
- Restrict visitors to minimize the number of people in school buildings.
- Review procedures with any vendors/contractors having access to school buildings (security, custodial, food, transportation, remodeling or construction)

Staffing Strategies

- Ensure nurse staffing to respond to health concerns.
- Consider whether schools need additional personnel to ensure social distancing at lunch and before or after school.
- Consider whether additional janitorial services are needed.

Environmental Considerations

- Minimize use of shared school supplies and gym equipment. If it must be used, disinfect between uses. Please reference this [list of approved cleaning products](#).
- Instruct teachers and students to disinfect desks and commonly used surfaces between classes.
- School districts should consider equipping schools with hand sanitizer.
- Encourage students, faculty and staff to wash hands periodically throughout the day.
- Consider how schools would implement entry screening procedures.
- Encourage anyone who is sick to stay home.
- Educate and train staff on signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and send home students, staff or faculty who are ill.

Masking Recommendations

- Provide cloth face coverings to students and staff for when social distancing is not possible, like during hallway passage and follow CDC and state masking guidelines.
- Order masks to make sure they are available when needed. Some schools are already ordering school themed washable and reusable masks.

Special Education Recommendations

- Prepare to make accommodations for students with disabilities and those with medical conditions that make them high risk for COVID-19. Discuss students' needs with families in advance of schools reopening.
- Teaching assistants should wear a mask if they are helping students with activities of daily living and cannot maintain social distance from students.

For more information on COVID-19, visit www.lakecountyil.gov/coronavirus or www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.

Should you have any questions on the above strategies, please contact Lea Bacci at lbacci@lakecountyil.gov or 224-330-9213.